



TOOL 2: PREPARING YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER



MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 2

This tool is designed to help you with the practical preparation in your job search. It is part of a series of 5 tools especially designed for international and multicultural talent looking for a job in Belgium.

You'll learn:

- ✓ How to make your CV and motivation letter Belgium proof
- ✓ How to let your LinkedIn profile shine
- ✓ The importance of lifelong learning
- ✓ What language course to take and why



CONTENT

1. The resume	3
2. The cover letter	6
3. LinkedIn	8
4. Lifelong learning	12
5. Language training	13
6. CV examples	15
7. Cover letter examples	16
8. Takeaways	17
9. Inspired by	18

1. THE RESUME

OR CV

Along with a great cover letter, your CV is **your ticket to a job interview**. So take your time to make yours stand out.

You should definitely start with a clear structure. You don't want to waste the recruiter's time. So make your CV as easy to read as possible.

CLEAN, CLEAR & TAILORED

The main purpose of your CV is to give an **overview of your professional achievements**. Surely you should also mention other qualifications or certifications that can be of added value to the job. But always keep the main goal of why you are sending your CV in mind.

Always **tailor** your CV to a specific job vacancy. Some of your professional achievements might be more relevant than others. You can highlight certain tasks you did that show a wanted skill.



A STANDARD BELGIAN CV CONSISTS OF:

- ▲ 1-2 pages (max.)
- ▲ Content: personal data, work experience, education, additional skills (and sometimes personality traits)
- ▲ Special emphasis on professional work experience with function, time period and tasks and achievements
- ▲ Knowledge of English, French or Dutch. If you're not a native speaker, rate your Dutch/French skills via following categories: basic, able to talk with colleagues, able to talk with customers or fluent

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR CV

Putting your date of birth on your resume can, in some cases, feel like you're giving yourself a disadvantage. In Belgium 95% of the people will put their date of birth on their resume, so if you don't add it, it would be a bit strange. If you're, for example, applying for a junior position and you're a bit older than most juniors, clearly state in your motivation letter why you're the perfect candidate despite your seniority.



- ▲ Start with your **contact information** (name, address, date of birth, contact details such as email, phone number and social media profiles like LinkedIn). Also indicate the status of your Belgian work permit (if applicable).
- ▲ Proceed with listing your **work experience** with your **most recent experience first**. State your position and employer as well as your responsibilities and start/leave dates. Make sure to share achievements too (preferably achievements that are relevant for the job you're applying for).
- ▲ List your **education** (also beginning with the most recent diploma) including degree, location, start/finish dates, study focus and thesis topic if relevant to your further career.
- ▲ Definitely add **all your language skills** (very important in Belgium). If you have **no or little knowledge of Dutch/French**, but are planning to **take courses** for sure mention it.
- ▲ Name **IT skills and additional work-related courses** you may have completed.
- ▲ Also add **a personal touch**: not only leisure time activities, but volunteer work, etc.
- ▲ Always keep **the structure** of your CV in mind, use clear headings and subheadings.
- ▲ Most companies will screen you based on your competencies and skills. But in some cases you will need to **validate your degree** if it was obtained outside of Belgium. The organisation that can help you with validating your degree is different depending on your stay in the Flemish, French or German speaking part. More information can be found **here**.



GAPS

Try to avoid **gaps** in your CV. If you served in the military after school, do not just leave it out. As military service is no longer obligatory in Belgium, you should mention your service or it might raise questions. The same accounts for work and travel, au-pair stays or voluntary services abroad. All those **experiences** can also be considered as assets, especially if you are still young and do not have much job experience. If you're new in a country or are trying to figure out what your new job goal should be, you probably got a gap between your previous working experience and the one you're looking for now. Don't leave this out of your CV. Explain the gap. You could write: move to Belgium, following language courses, any other course you are taking....

LAYOUT

The **layout of a CV** becomes increasingly important. You can make a fairly good CV in MS Word or similar text processing programmes, but it is best to catch the attention of a potential employer with a stunning layout. It's the first impression the employer gets of you, and you want it to be good. In times of the internet, you no longer need to be a design professional to make an impressive CV.

On the following websites you can sign up for free and create a modern, appealing CV and pimp your motivation letters.



piktochart.com
resume.io
easel.ly
canva.com

2. THE COVER LETTER

OR MOTIVATION LETTER



Motivation letters are a very important part of the written job application and they allow you to **illustrate your unique qualities**. In a motivation letter, you can elaborate on your personal strengths and emphasise your value to the company. The motivation letter often determines if you get invited to an interview or not. This short but personal letter should convince the company that you are both motivated and qualified, to help them see the match. Some Belgian recruiters will not even look at your application if a motivation letter is missing.

Make sure that you write a separate motivation letter for every job application! As the jobs you apply for may differ in tasks or requirements, always adapt the letter to the job.

Do not make your motivation letter longer than 250 words - **one page is more than enough**. You either react to a job vacancy or you apply spontaneously, but in either case, make sure to refer to the correct company and job.

Your letter should have a good **balance** between **professional relevance and personality**, and you should not be too modest, neither too self-assured. To structure your motivation letter, you preferably choose a chronological order. To really convince the recruiter of your match with their vacancy, try to use the same description of certain skills, points or demands that were made in the job offer. There are no specific rules about layout and style of your motivation letter in Belgium. See it as a complementary document to your CV, where you can distinguish your profile from other candidates for this job.

The letter is a chance to show them a **glimpse of your personality and your creativity**, so feel free to also take an unconventional approach - but of course this depends on the function you're applying for (e.g. marketing people are generally expected to be more creative than IT consultants). When you're finished writing your cover letter, make sure to proofread it and have others check it as well.

In the last section of this tool you will find a few examples of possible motivation letters. **But don't forget: always rewrite your motivation letter with every new application.**

GUIDELINES WHEN WRITING YOUR MOTIVATION LETTER

- ✓ Mention where and how you found the job offer
- ✓ Emphasise qualities required for the job to show that you examined the job offer
- ✓ With spontaneous applications, indicate that you know the company (include references to their values and company culture: check their website). Ideally you can make a reference to someone you've already talked to or know in the company [More info in Tool 3: The importance of networking]
- ✓ Give concrete examples of personality traits: if you state that you are a team player, mention a real-life situation where you successfully used your qualities as a team player
- ✓ Tell them that you look forward to hearing from them and also mention that you would be glad to get the opportunity to further explain your CV or to present yourself in a job interview -> make them curious and persuade them to answer

3. LINKEDIN

According to a Belgian newspaper 3 million Belgians have a LinkedIn profile. So not being active on this easy to use social business network is a missed opportunity. Here are some tips and tricks you can keep in mind to make your profile shine. Want to know how to expand your network using LinkedIn? Then take a look at tool 3: The importance of Networking.

1

Your headline: this headline is the first thing that is visible underneath your profile picture. A lot of people put their job title here but it's already in your work history – so why not go for something a bit more creative? Use it as a pitch that is short and interesting. Make employers want to check you out.



Don't add phrases like "looking for a job", "actively seeking.." in your headline. It might seem like a good idea, because you're letting recruiters and your network know you're looking for a job, but such statements will not really help you. As stated by **Forbes**: you will make yourself part of a mass looking for a job and you might across as a bit desperate. If you want recruiters to find you, you have to know that your headline has the most weight in the algorithm LinkedIn uses to filter on profiles. That means that the words you put in your headline will be the words through which others find you.

Profile picture: this is your first contact on LinkedIn. Adding a picture will help with memory recall and it can show a more personal side of yourself. Make sure to upload a professional picture in a good quality. The ideal picture would be one that is cropped from above your head to just below the shoulders. Also, make it visible to non-contacts. If your photo isn't visible, you will easily be overlooked.

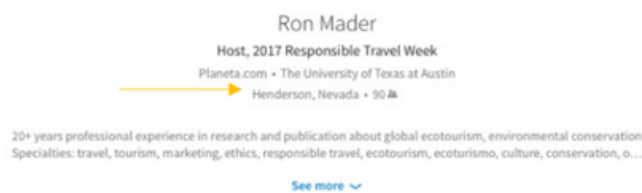
2



David Akam

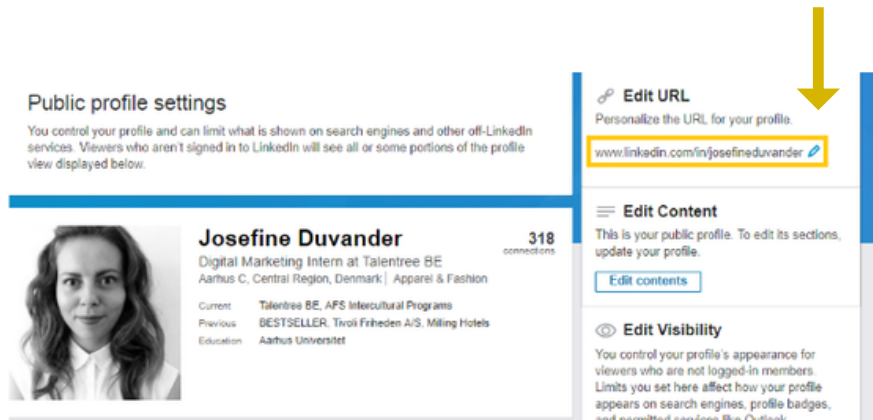
3

Location: recruiters are known to narrow down their search by location. Use this to your advantage by adding your location to your profile.



Change your profile URL: change the URL of your profile to something short and nice. By doing this, you make it much easier for people (and search engines) to find your profile. Figuring out if your name is an available solution can be a quick fix.

4



5

Use the “Open Candidates” function: in this way, you can privately signal to recruiters that you are up for a new challenge without your current employer finding out. You can segment the function based on location, company size, job title etc.

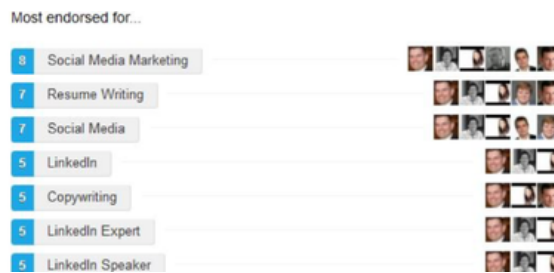


TIP: Take advantage and ask your friends to rate them already for you.



6

Skills: add at least 5 relevant skills to your LinkedIn. People with 5 skills or more get more messages from recruiters than those without. Other people can rate your skills if you list them. Don't forget that these skills need to be professional. And make sure not to forget that quality trumps quantity!




Recommend – and get recommended: recommendations boost the credibility of your profile and competences. Be generous and recommend the people in your professional network you enjoyed working with. Usually, what goes around comes around. Always remember the mantra though – quality over quantity!

7

Recommendations Ask to be recommended

Received (18) Given (11)




Louis Allport
Marketing and Technology Consultant Helping Small Businesses to Grow & Thrive
June 20, 2017, Louis was a client of Mandy's

Mandy has a fantastic understanding of how to use LinkedIn effectively to rapidly and consistently generate high-value leads that turn into clients.

I purchased some consulting time with Mandy, and that time was hugely valuable for mapping out an approach that grows your network, credibility, and lead-flow using LinkedIn in an organic way. And importantly, in a way that gives value to the community

8

Impress with your experience: because what is the value of a job title if you cannot explain what it entails? Make sure to add bullet points to your experiences so the recruiters understand your expertise better. You should list all relevant work experience, whether it is volunteering, a student job, a senior position, an apprenticeship or something completely different. Do not write full sentences and make sure to quantify whenever possible (% , € , budget...).



Intern Marketing Executive Education
Vlerick Business School
Sep 2015 – Nov 2015 - 3 mos
Gent en omgeving, België

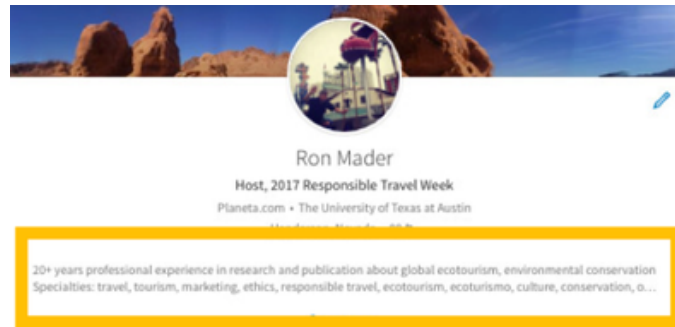
During my internship at Vlerick Business school I had various tasks as an intern in their Marketing department for executive education:

- Benchmarking different kind of programmes
- Helping out with marketing of programmes, events, newsletters...
- Coordinating Omnichannel in retail programme
- Helping out at events

...
[See less](#)

9

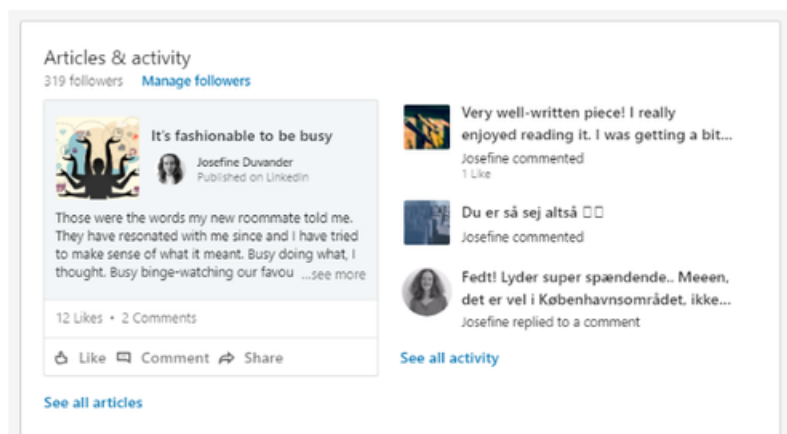
Summary: this part explains your unique talents and abilities. Google indexes LinkedIn quite high. If you Google yourself, your LinkedIn profile probably ends up in the top results. You can add some keywords to your summary to increase your opportunities. This means that you can add some words you think are relevant and for which you want to be found. For example: If you're an accountant, make sure you include some finance related words in your summary.



TIP: It's a good idea to Google yourself and make sure that what shows is professional

Be active: join groups, like posts, comment on videos – whatever you find relevant and interesting. The more you engage on LinkedIn in a professional way (ideally linked to your broader job goals), the better. And your activities will appear on top of your page and give the recruiter a nice idea about your personality and interests.

10



4. LIFELONG LEARNING

Online platforms

Whether you're looking for a job or currently found one you like, you should never stop learning and developing yourself. As seen in "Toolkit 1: How to set your new job goals", reskilling yourself could be the best next step for you. It's not even necessary to learn something completely new, investing in your strengths is always a wise thing to do. When you're new in a country, the local language is often a new skill to acquire. In the next few pages we made a list for you with online and offline courses or other options where you can combine learning a language with another skill. This list is only a selection of everything that's out there, you can use this as a basis for your search.

General online platforms

Coursera and **edX** are two really big online learning platforms that present a variety of courses from universities and other organisations.

Udemy offers some free courses, most cost around 11 euros. The principle is based on peer to peer learning, but you will find teaching stars on the platform.

Platforms for technical skills

Code academy offers a lot of free and useful courses for the most popular programming



languages. Not all courses are free, but the quality is good.

If you're looking for a more top-notch site for tech learning **Plural sight** is your way to go. They offer one or two free courses.

Udacity offers free courses, but also some that could cost you 1,000 euros. The free courses are quite useful as refreshers for topics like Algorithms, Math, etc. The paid courses are world-renowned.

Packtpub is the strange one in this list since it doesn't offer any courses, but offers some free books about tech topics. Perfect for polishing your app building skills and Python programming.

5. LANGUAGE TRAINING

Belgium has 3 official languages: Dutch, French and German. Depending on where you live and your target sector you'll soon notice that a lot of the vacancies require some knowledge of one of these three languages. Here are some examples of organisations and schools that offer language training:

1. Centrum voor Volwassenenonderwijs: CVO

These centres for adult education can be found in most major cities in Flanders as well as in the Brussels area. Courses are available during the day and in the evening. The courses are given in group depending on your level of Dutch/French.

2. University courses: eg UTC, Linguapolis

If you're looking for more high-paced classes, you should check out the courses at almost all universities in Belgium. You'll learn languages in group with part of the course consisting of independent study. We highly recommend this one for those who want to learn on a high level, perfect for future business life.

3. Centrum voor Basiseducatie: CBE

If you're not familiar with latin characters or you like to take your time, you can take a look at the classes this centre has to offer. The courses take place in small groups and are tailored to your learning speed. Classes take place during day time or evenings.

4. VDAB(Flanders), Actiris(Brussels)and Forem(Wallonia)

If you're looking for a combination of learning Dutch/French and another skill, the public employment services offer good combined courses. If you're just a beginner and don't know any Dutch/French, you'll first have to follow a beginner's course somewhere else.

5. Berlitz language school

The Berlitz language schools can be found in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liège and Waterloo. You can follow a wide variety of courses individually or in group, no matter what your level of Dutch/French/German is. They also offer online courses.

6. Business Language and Communication Centre

If you want to take your Business Dutch/French/German to the next level you could contact the BLCC. They offer a wide range of language courses focused on the business world.

7. The Alliance française Bruxelles-Europe

This organisation only offers French courses and is based in Brussels. They are specialised in French for European and International Relations and will be able to teach you the business French you need.

8. Wallangue

Wallangue is an initiative of Wallonia where you can learn languages online. It's free to use for all residents of Wallonia. They offer online courses but also organise events to practice your new language in real life. The website is in French only, so you will need a basic knowledge of it to understand how to navigate the site (or you can use Google Translate or any other online translation service).

9. Duolingo

Duolingo is an online language-learning platform. It's free, has an app and supports you to learn a language by using it 5 minutes a day.



Practice your Dutch/French/German with others:

There are a lot of different kinds of initiatives that are focused on bringing people together to practice a language. There is a website called "Nederlands oefenen" where you can find initiatives in your neighbourhood. If you want to practice your French with others you could attend the meetings of The Brussels French Language Meetup Group.

Sometimes it can come in handy to know which language level you reached. If you're interested to find out, contact your public employment service. They have free online tests that can help you out.

Attending language courses is also a great way of **expanding your network**. It's an easy and informal way to meet new people. There are stories of people who found their job thanks to someone they met at a language course.

Don't underestimate the power of good knowledge of Business English. Almost all of the above mentioned organisations offer English courses as well. So if your English could use some extra attention, don't be afraid to take the step.

6. CV EXAMPLES

Professional picture

Clear overview of programmes he can work with

MARCELINE ANDERSON
SOFTWARE ENGINEER

PERSONAL PROFILE
A software engineer with hands-on experience in all levels of testing, including performance, functional, integration, systems and user acceptance.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Hands-on SQL, experience
- Java, Ruby, PHP and Python experience
- Microsoft ASP.NET MVC, Web API experience
- Working knowledge of C, C++, and C#

WORK EXPERIENCE

SOFTWARE ENGINEER
Healthmade Solutions | 2015 - Present

- Directs software design and development
- Evaluates interface between hardware and software
- Advises customers regarding maintenance of software system

JUNIOR ENGINEER
RealPro Software Inc. | 2014 - 2015

- Stored, retrieved, and manipulated data
- Modified existing software to correct errors and optimize efficiency
- Prepared detailed reports

PERSONAL INFO

Mobile: 123-456-7890
Email: marceline.anderson@gmail.com
Portfolio: www.reallygreatsite.com
Day of Birth: 01/01/1980
Address: 123 Anywhere Street, Any City, Belgium

EDUCATION HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF EL DORADO
Bachelor of Software Engineering, 2014

- President, Computer and Technology Organization
- Vice President, Programming Club
- Member, Video Game Society
- Member, Student IT Helpdesk

BEECHTOWN ACADEMY
Graduated Class of 2010
Honor Roll

- President and Founder, Computer Club
- Student Council President
- Debate Team Vice President
- Member of the Math Team
- Member of the Chess Team

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Spanish: mother tongue
English: Professional level
Dutch: Able to talk with colleagues, currently taking classes at UTC

OTHER SKILLS

- The ability to analyze complex technical information
- Can analyze, design and implement database structures
- Detail oriented
- Excellent problem solver

Level of Dutch explained in a very practical way + mentioned he is following a course

Head title that immediately shows her expertise

Skills organised by usage

KRIZZA WATSONS
DIGITAL MARKETING

ABOUT
Extremely motivated to constantly develop my skills and grow professionally. I am confident in my ability to come up with interesting ways in storytelling.

CONTACT + INFO

Phone: +12 841 8491
Address: Street, City, Belgium
Date of birth:
Email: krizza.watson@gmail.com
LinkedIn:

SKILLS

SOCIAL MEDIA
Facebook business manager, LinkedIn Campaign Manager, Instagram

MARKETING AUTOMATION
HubSpot, Mailchimp, Zapier, Google Tag Manager

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH, 2019
Bachelor of Arts, Major in Photography

NEW TOWN UNIVERSITY, 2017
Bachelor of Arts, Major in Graphic Design

WORK EXPERIENCE

HEAD OF MARKETING | HEI STUDIO BE
2024 - PRESENT

- Managing a team of 7 marketers
- Increased overall conversion rate from 2% to 4%
- Implemented Marketing automation throughout the company

DIGITAL MARKETER | SHUTTERFEED UK
2022 - 2023

- Responsible for all social media campaigns
- SEA for Head office
- Content creator

INTERN | L.A.L.A. LAND STUDIO UK
2021 - 2022

- Worked on various local commercials
- Assisted in product shoots for the company
- Helped in the conceptualization of a viral internet advertisements

LANGUAGES

ENGLISH
Mother Tongue

DUTCH
Good enough to talk with colleagues + currently taking language classes at UCT

Clear overview of previous work experience + example of accomplishments

7. COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Witteveen+Bos
Posthoflei 41
9990 Maldegem

Dear Mr Deruyck

8 April 2017

I am writing in response to your ad for the position as Environmental Engineer. As an experienced and motivated Master of Environmental Engineering, I would like to apply as a candidate for this position.

In 2011 I graduated as a Master of Environmental Engineering from Baghdad University. After pursuing my master studies, I worked as a advisor at Al-Yamama Engineering for two years applying my skills to a range of projects including sustainable technology assessments and management of multi-disciplinary project teams.

Subsequently I worked project engineer at Deme in Oman. I evaluated the carbon impact of proposed hydropower in Khasab, where I also conducted a cost analysis and carbon inventory for the design of a deep heat geothermal energy facility.

For another year I worked at Alpha Ventus, a sustainable energy project in the North Sea. I was responsible for delivering a sustainable technology assessment to complement a campus' low-carbon design strategy.

Due to my professional and educational experience, I think I am well suited to pursue a career in sustainability consulting. And I am very motivated to apply my experience while working at Witteveen+Bos, one of Belgium's finest environmental engineering companies.

If you have any further questions regarding my application please feel free to contact me via e-mail or the telephone. I am looking forward from hearing from you and for your call to discuss my application in great detail.

Thank you very much in advance for considering my application.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Al-Fayari

Lange Boomstraat 9
9000 Gent
0032 4982 7102
al-fayari@gmail.com

Dreamworld Events
Zandbergstraat 21
2300 Turnhout

Dear Sir or Madam,

21 March 2017

I am writing in reference to the advertised position of Marketing Assistant, as published on your website. As a highly motivated marketing graduate with strong interpersonal skills, I think I suit the advertised profile, and therefore I would like to submit my application.

My interpersonal skills I have developed during my college, since I was involved in a student organization, where I organized activities and events. My position as event coordinator in the organization allowed me to work more closely with colleagues and various stakeholders inside and outside university.

Moreover, I developed time management skills and good organizational skills, which I would like to further improve within a professional business environment.

Even though I do not have professional work experience yet, I believe my personal attributes make me suitable for the position of Marketing Assistant. Since have been developing my customer service skills for the benefit of event management, I would like apply my competences by working at Dreamworld Events.

As requested I am enclosing my resume, where you can find details information on my education and skills. References are available on request, or you can contact the reference persons listed below on your own. If you need additional information or documents, I would gladly give you further explanation in an interview.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Aswasi

Montignystraat 31
2018 Antwerpen
0032 4187 0026
saswasi@gmail.com

8. TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Keep your resume as relevant as possible. If not all of your experiences fit on 1, max 2 pages, then only use the ones most relevant for the job you're applying for.
- ✓ Your motivation letter needs to be tailored to each application.
- ✓ Gaps in your resume should be explained.
- ✓ If your Dutch/French/German is non-existent or if you're in the process of learning, do not forget to write on your CV that you're willing to (further) work on it (or mention a course you're going to take). Of course only do this if it's true!
- ✓ Be creative when it comes to your LinkedIn profile: don't just write your current job title as headline but use this space to really stand out.
- ✓ Learning a new language for business purposes is most recommended with a course at university level. It will take you a bit more time to learn, but in the end it will pay off with a new language you can really use on business level. Don't forget to polish your business English too if necessary.



9. INSPIRED BY

The content in this toolkit is created for the **Newcomer Induction Management Acceleration Programme (NiMAP)**, sponsored by **ESF** and **the Flemish Government**. Goal of the project is to fasten the job search and induction process on the work floor of newcomers entering the Belgian job market by supporting both talent and employers.

Belgian partners in this project are **Vlerick Business School** - a top-tier international business school - and **Talentree** - a new venture building international and entrepreneurial teams. This project is inspired by the Rapid Acceleration Programme from our transnational partner, Stockholm School of Economics, whom we are deeply grateful for a great partnership!

The project team:

- Prof Dr Dirk Buyens - Professor of Human Resources and Partner at Vlerick Business School
- Dr Emmy Defever - Senior Researcher Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Merel Dutry - Intern Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Hannelore Waterschoot - Managing Partner at Talentree
- Nancy Leys - Project Manager at Talentree
- Josefine Duvander - Intern Digital Communication at Talentree
- Myrthe Waterschoot - Marketing Manager at Talentree

We would like to thank:

- All international talents who were in the process of finding a job or already found one for sharing their challenges, learnings, tips and dreams. We wish them a great future career journey!
- All the companies and organisations for sharing the employer's perspective via focus groups, interviews and coaching on the work floor
- All other organisations like the public employment services, mentoring and other great local and international projects, network organisations,... for sharing their expertise
- All experts who shared their experiences and knowledge through blog posts and social media



OVERVIEW FIVE TOOLS:



Tool 1: Setting your new job goals

Tool 1 will help you research the Belgian job market, find more information about bottleneck vacancies and mentoring programmes. You'll discover how you can define your new job goal. It ends with a framework to help you define your strengths and weaknesses and two testimonials about reskilling and focusing on your passion.



Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

Tool 2 will help you create a good CV, cover letter and a LinkedIn profile. It contains information on life long learning and language training with names of possible organisations and courses. It ends with concrete examples of resumes and cover letters.



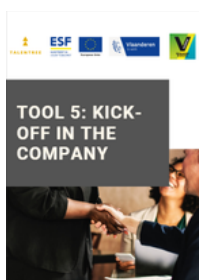
Tool 3: The importance of networking

Tool 3 will tell you why and how to network. You'll learn how to sell yourself, use LinkedIn as a network tool and how to follow up on any networking you did. It contains a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job in Belgium thanks to his network. It contains a checklist you can use when preparing for a network meeting.



Tool 4: From first call to getting hired

Tool 4 will guide you through the application process. You'll learn about telephone screenings, preparation for any job interview, assessment centres and feedback. It will give you more insight on how to answer a question related to salary expectations and the STAR method (a method frequently used by recruiters). It ends with a testimonial from a newcomer who found a job by being confident and it contains cards that will help you practice difficult interview questions.



Tool 5: Kick-off in the company

Tool 5 will help you when you've found a job. It contains information on talent development, career moves, internal and external networks, evaluation talks, work-life balance and a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job and made her personal life fit with her work life. In the end you'll find a checklist that will help you in your first three months on the job.